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## Issue 2.2, March 2012

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## **01. A short interview with Laura Muir**

### **Question 1**

Could you, please, tell us, what is the job of a curator? What would be the difficulties, if any, of course, of curating photography, in general, especially in comparison to curating painting?

### **Answer 1**

At the Busch-Reisinger Museum I work with a variety of media, including paintings and photography. As a light-sensitive medium, photography can be challenging as there are limitations to how long it can be on view, which is usually less of an issue for painting. In terms of developing an exhibition concept, selecting works, and installing objects in a space, however, many of the curatorial considerations are the same.

### **Question 2**

Apart from being “a new means of exploring his interests in reflections, transparency, and the effects of light and shadow”, of course, why do you think Lyonel Feininger “took up the camera at the Bauhaus in 1928”? Do you suspect any other reason? Could his correspondence reveal us anything else?

### **Answer 2**

Even before a formal workshop was devoted to it, photography was a source of fascination for many at the Bauhaus in the late 1920s. Feininger was inspired by the enthusiasm of his sons Andreas and T. Lux, who had installed a darkroom in the basement of their house, as well as the work his fellow Bauhaus master and next-door neighbour, László Moholy-Nagy. Although he remained committed to painting, Feininger was intrigued by the possibilities of a new medium. During the late 1920s and early 1930s he experimented extensively with night photography, negative printing, multiple exposures, enlarging, and radical cropping. In his correspondence he describes his work with photography as stimulating and inspiring as well as a creative activity he was able to pursue when he had difficulty painting.

### **Question 3**

Unfortunately, I cannot visit the exhibition, could, you, please, tell if you find any relation between Feininger’s work in photography and his painting?

### **Answer 3**

In his paintings and photography Feininger explored similar subject matter (night scenes, trains, seascapes) as well as atmospheric conditions, reflections, transparency, and the effects of light and shadow. They became directly related when, for a short time, he began to use photography as a means of identifying motifs for his paintings. Many of the works he produced in the city Halle (1929-1931) are based on photographic studies. The most “photographic” of these paintings are characterized by precise framing, tight cropping, and unexpected viewpoints.

### **Question 4**

In conclusion, what would you think of the best qualities of this exhibition and in what ways do feel this exhibition differs from any other photography exhibitions?

**Answer 4**

Comprised of around sixty vintage photographs, this exhibition offers the first opportunity to consider Feininger's achievement within the medium. I am particularly pleased with the section devoted to the work Feininger created at the Bauhaus. Thanks to key loans from Germany, including a stunning series of the Bauhaus building at night, it was possible to recreate that moment in late 1928 and early 1929 when he first began to experiment with the medium. Although the emphasis is on Feininger as a photographer, the exhibition also acknowledges relationships to his work in other media through the integration of a woodblock print and several drawings, which highlight themes explored in the photographs while underscoring his versatility as an artist.

**Laura Muir, thank you very much.**

**Laura Muir** is Assistant Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Division of Modern and Contemporary Art, Harvard Art Museums.

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## Books received

Reviews are welcome from the books below.  
(Alphabetically listing)Â

**Oudsten, Frank den**Â (2012) *space.time.narrative: the exhibition as post-spectacular stage*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing. (ISBN: 978-0-7546-7655-3)

**Silbergeld, Jerome, Ching, Dora C.Y., Smith, Judith G., and Murc, Alfreda** (2012) *Bridges to Heaven: Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. (ISBN13: 978-0-691-15298-1)

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## Books reviewed

**Harris, Jonathan** (2001), *The New Art History, A Critical Introduction*, London & New York: Routledge. (ISBN: 978-0-415-23008-7)

**Davis, Whitney** (2010), *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, Princeton, New Jersey and Woodstock, Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press. (ISBN: 978-0-691-14765-9)

**Kemp, Martin** (2004), *Leonardo* (2011), Oxford: Oxford University Press. (ISBN 978-0-19-958335-5)

How does one teach art history and theory? This is the question in advanced standing classes. Do you separate history from theory? This is another question in a same teaching context. An answer largely depends on the audience, one might easily support. These two questions came to my mind when I received Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A critical introduction*, Whitney Davis, *A general theory of visual culture* and Martin Kemp, *Leonardo*. More, precisely, which book could one adopt? And why?

**Jonathan Harris'** book has endured almost more than 10 years since its first publication – a thing that could, on its own, mean it is a successful book; more, one can benefit from a hardback or paperback edition. Personally, I see no historic substance in using the word “new” in its title. Even though, in the introduction and his first chapter, he spares several pages explaining why he has chosen this particular word and, also, clarifying, among others, the aims and the audience of this book. This effort could have been avoided if he had simply chosen in the first place to use the words “radical” or “critical” – one other problematic word he uses interchangeably with the word “new” in his text. But again, one could have relied to the old-fashioned way of stating the book deals with “Art Theory after 1960s / A textbook” (I say ‘60s, because many, if not all, theories of ‘70s were being cultivated after the middle of 1960s). In the meanwhile, one may gladly let all these terminology issues aside, at least I did, when one realizes the internal structure of this book. One might support of its emblematic nature; with the use of “Key texts” close to title, the “text” as the rhetoric of the supposed “image” and finally the “Select bibliography” section instead of explanatory labels. This innovative presentation of subject matter is the reason for the success of the book. The themes covered in this way are “The capitalist modernity, the nation-state, and visual representation,” “Feminism, art, and art history,” “Subjects, identities, and visual ideology,” “Structures, and meanings in art and society,” and last but not least “The representation of sexuality.” And, as one could describe me as interested in the theme of “visual ideology,” I rushed into that chapter only to find out that the name of Nicos Hadjinicolaou, for instance, was referred in the introduction of the book. Nevertheless, my “that kind of” curiosity was wealthy recompensed as I was acquainted with an old favourite quote of mine; – not to mention that this book is full of quotes – that of Norman Bryson – a quote from “The gaze in the expanded field” – stating that:

“in art history, formalism, in art theory, the approach to art via the psychology of perception, in the work of [Ernst] Gombrich or [Rudolf] Arnheim; in the construction of museum and exhibition spaces premised in the practice of decontextualizing the image in order to permit unmediated communion between the viewer’s eye and pure form. From these and related activities has emerged the notion of art as a matter of perceptual purity: timeless, sequestered from the social domain, universal.”

And from this point Harris continues:

“With this last reference one can see how Bryson’s psychoanalytical perspective meets up, however, unexpectedly, with [Alan] Wallach’s analysis of the ideological role of art museums in modern US society. Both see the vision of curators and art historians, as well as the vision of viewers who visit museums, as necessarily subject to social and ideological values and interests.” (p.151)

Not quite unexpectedly, though, this book is definitely loyal to its goal to be a critical introduction to Art History after 1970s; and it still remains a book from which graduate students could largely profit no matter if they follow the sequence of theories presentation or swift through their “favourite” chapter – as I did for the expense of time.

Another option to our question would be to use a book which after the presentation of “art history” through “art theory” introduces students to new concepts of intellectual thought. In that second book, *A general theory of visual culture*, **Whitney Davis**, supervising all theories of art, proposes his own art theory. He does that by masterly knitting already tested theories with his own anthropological reading of art. He starts wittingly quoting Heinrich Wölfflin saying that “vision has its history” and that “the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history.” (p. 9) It is from Wölfflin’s theory that Davis begins his story of visual culture. But, first, he explains what visual culture is; as best regarded as an *expansion* of art history. (p. 7) Throughout his book, though, he only uses examples that one could easily find in all common general art history/ theory books from pre-history to modern era, in Gardner’s for instance, if one opts out the pictures concerning Rudolf Arnheim’s visual perception theory. Nevertheless we are also (at least I am) introduced to new vocabulary; for instance:

“In seeing man-made artifacts, we do not only recognize the objects *simpliciter*. (The definition of man-made artifacts must be elastic. The term usually refers to such material objects as tools, shelters, and works of art, but it can be applied to natural phenomena, human persons, and social activities.) We also tend to apprehend their configurative, stylistic, representational, and cultural aspects, what I will call their “formality” and “representationality” (Chapter Three), their “style” and “stylisticality” (Chapter Four), their pictoriality (Chapter Six, Seven, and Eight), and their “culturality” (Chapter Nine and Ten). Indeed, our recognition of an object in the anthropological sense – as something that is used, usable, and useful in our form of life – depends on accessing a substantial proportion of these interacting aspective horizons in substantial and substantially appropriate ways, or, as I will put it, on succeeding to them. We must recognize their forms of *likeness*.” (p.36)

This was an example from the “introduction” where he outlines what this book is all about. More, he continues:

“And the substantive *reifications* of aspective successions that typify extreme or high formalism (Chapter Three), stylistic typology (Chapter Four), the iconography of motifs (Chapter Seven and Eight), and culturology (Chapter Nine) inculcove – in fact, a fatal – theoretical error.” (p. 37)

The book is overall structured over three parts – problems: Part One –The Succession of Visual Culture, Part Two – What is Cultural about Vision? and Part Three – What is Visual about Culture?

In conclusion, the use or the application of Lewis Roberts Binford’s, for instance, theoretical findings (p.133-138) into the field in question does not turn, in my personal

opinion, art history into visual culture; if you also take into consideration the examples he chooses to apply his theoretical statement to the “problem” of successions of style. In addition, that’s the reason he starts his discourse with Wölfflin, while Arthur Coleman Danto and Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein’s writings provide him frequently support in the construction of his theory. Such an attempt, though, only adds a new theoretical weapon into the armoury of art history. A swift in paradigm does not, necessarily, alter the name of that particular discipline in which the swift takes place. Making this way the book, “A general theory of art history,” an indispensable book with which one can sharpen the critical thinking and analytical skills of his/her students.

“The abbreviations of works do injury to knowledge and to love, for love of anything is the offspring of knowledge, love being more fervent as knowledge is more certain, and certainty springs from a thorough knowledge of all those parts which united compose the whole... truly it is impatience, mother of folly, which praises brevity.”

(Leonardo, c.1510)

There is, at least, one case where Leonardo was wrong, when one deals with **Martin Kemp**, *Leonardo*; from where I quote above Leonardo. (p.1) The author has also stated earlier in its preface that:

“This book uses the opportunity of a relatively small format to concentrate on how we can grasp the essential nature of Leonardo da Vinci, both in himself as and a historical phenomenon.” (p. vi)

This last book would seem a rather peculiar choice for an advanced standing art history audience, and more suitable to a general public or at the best cases for art history amateurs or beginners / undergraduates; since there is not one foot or endnote, for instance. But, is that so? Such a book could have a twofold use. On the one hand, it could help students easily concentrate closely on one historical figure and his work through which the teacher could present previous art theories and discuss them in the context of their appearance. More, teacher could then support and test his/her theory, in the same art history specimen, without confusing students by using different “objects of art history” while discoursing on diverse art theories. On the other hand, such a book could provide the teacher with an invaluable source to test and train students over critical reading while tracing back the original documents and sources, when possible, of the text; playing that way a sort of academic hide-and-seek game . Furthermore, this updated edition of the 2004 Leonardo book is the first book on da Vinci to include his two recently discovered works; *La Bella Principessa* (Portrait of Bianca Sforza?) (c.1495-6), on vellum almost probably cut from the *Sforziada* in Warsaw, and the *Salvator Mundi* (c. 1504-7), a painting previously known only from copies and engravings has now reappeared. (p. 256 and 258) The book is also supplemented by a Leonardo “Gallery,” a chronology with “Leonardo’s Life in Outline” and six-pages of “Further Reading.” In addition, the author is fully aware of his own historical existence by stating:

“Perhaps I should stop here. At least I am confident that Leonardo will continue to exert his spell, whether I have done a good job or not.” (p. 250)

For the question I placed in the opening paragraph, there is, of course, no definite answer; it largely lies in teaching goals one sets and through which one constructs the outcome of his/her teaching.

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## Next issue

### History of museology

This is the open call for papers for the next *Art History Supplement* (AHS). The proposed general theme, but not limited to, is “History of museology”. Submission deadline 20 April 2012.

**"History of museology"** could include, among others, a) general aspects of pre-history and history of museums, galleries and museology, b) issues of collecting and exhibiting praxis, c) stories of people working in such environments, d) personal histories that reveal a vital role in the study of museums as an independent academic field of study, e) museum administration and management issues based on concrete examples, f) museums, theories and people, g) the role and the subject of museum education / communication, h) programming and designing a museum or an exhibition, and i) aspects of organizing a museum or an exhibition from the idea of something to the opening of museum doors to public.

*AHS* publishes material, dealing with all time periods, methodologies, media, techniques and debates within the field of art history. Contributions from any other science (social or not) corresponding to material culture are also welcome.

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## Luitsen Kuiper, a conservator's methodology

by Femke van der Knaap

### *Introduction*

Luitsen Kuiper (1936-1989) worked for almost thirty years in the field of conservation in the Netherlands (figure no.1). He worked in private practice in his early career and was later employed by several collections and museums, including the Mauritshuis in The Hague and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. He was one of the first conservators who saw the importance of systematically documenting treatments such as his use of solvents, fillers and retouching media. His written documentation is still available in the archives of the museums where he worked. In this paper his working practice as a conservator, his ethical viewpoints and innovations introduced into common practice by Kuiper have been reconstructed by researching his archives and by interviewing his close family members, colleagues and students.[1]



**01.** Luitsen Kuiper. (Photo: NationaalArchief/SpaarnestadPhoto/Anefo/RobBogaerts)

### *Biography*

Luitsen Kuiper was born on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1936 in Oud-Loosdrecht, a village near Amsterdam. His father was a pastor who oversaw a country parish, however by the start of the 1950s the family had moved to Amsterdam and remained here. Kuiper went to high school in the city and worked as a newspaper boy to earn some money. As such he came into contact with Mr. Zeegers, a paintings restorer who worked for private customers. Zeegers made an immediate strong impression on the young Kuiper and from that first moment he decided to become a restorer. Kuiper apprenticed to a number of restorers, including Zeegers, to reach his goal. Kuiper worked for both private customers, collections as well as museums throughout his career which spanned from 1962 to 1989. His first museum post was in The Hague where he worked from 1962 till 1970 for the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis and the Museum Mesdag collection. He was the sole conservator for both museums during this period, working out of the same studio. While in The Hague, Kuiper also worked for private customers from his own house.[2]

In 1970 he moved to Amsterdam to become the head of the paintings conservation department at the Rijksmuseum. His new responsibilities for this bigger collection meant that he could no longer work for private customers. As the head of department, Kuiper oversaw a number of other conservators

and collaborated with the curatorial department. Students, sometimes from abroad, came to intern in the studio from 1973; many of the Dutch students remained and in turn were employed by the Rijksmuseum. Kuiper remained as the head of the conservation department until his death in 1989.

### ***Innovations***

Luitsen Kuiper was an intelligent, charismatic man and a person who liked to share his knowledge especially of paintings and restoration. He thought it important that his students spoke multiple languages, and had a well rounded knowledge of all the aspects related to the field of conservation. [3] Later in his career he was instrumental in defining an educational program that could deliver well educated and skilled conservators, a sea change from previous times when the only route to train as a conservator was by apprenticing in a restorer's studio. Unfortunately Kuiper died too early to have played a large role in the starting process for the program that is now given by the University of Amsterdam.[4]

In 1973 Kuiper published a short book *"Restoration of Paintings."*[5] This was intended for the general (Dutch) public with information on the terminology and practices common to the conservation and restoration of paintings. By publishing this book, Kuiper was one of the first conservators in the Netherlands who brought the profession into contact with the public. Luitsen Kuiper saw the importance in sharing knowledge with others than his direct colleagues. This brought the profession into the open, allowing the general public to understand better what happened in a conservator's studio to their cultural heritage. Kuiper's methodology influenced museum practice; for example Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* was restored in public view after the attack in 1975.[6] It was decided it would be restored in the exhibition room where people could watch from behind a window, partly because the painting was too big to restore it in the studio. However this had never been done before and it made the front pages of the newspaper.[7]

Post war working practice in conservation studios rarely considered the health and safety of the conservator. Scandalised by this lack of safety precautions Kuiper introduced something that was quite new at that time in the Netherlands. In 1975 a portable extraction system was installed in the public studio where the *Nightwatch* was treated.[8] This was both to protect the conservators' working but also the audience who watched the restoration from behind the glass window. Contemporary research was beginning to reveal that working with toxic solvents could be harmful to the human body. Once the treatment of the *Nightwatch* was completed the installation was reused in the main studios. However the installation was too small to protect all the conservators working within that space. Thus in 1982 a complete extraction system with enough capacity to protect all the employees was finally installed.[9] Towards the end of his career, to further protect conservators working with solvents, Kuiper also insisted on the use of personal protective equipment such as protective gloves and gas masks. Sadly this increased awareness of the danger of solvents came too late for Kuiper himself. He died of lung cancer, possibly workrelated, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1989 at the age of 53.[10]

### ***Treatment reports***

The protocol for written documentation did not exist when Kuiper was first employed at the Mauritshuis in 1962. Previously records of treatment carried out were minimal. Written documentation was by this stage common practice elsewhere, thus this practice came rather late to the Netherlands. For example: by the 1930s George L. Stout at the Fogg Art Museum insisted that treatments carried out by conservators were recorded; similarly in the same period at the National Gallery in London documentation became standard practice under the supervision of the chief conservator, Helmut Ruhemann.[11]

At the Mauritshuis, Kuiper introduced a folder for each painting in which the treatments were described. The folder consisted of a folio sized piece of paper. Space was allocated for the identification details for each painting on the front. This included the inventory number, the title of the painting, the artist and the date executed. On the inside, a separate section on the verso was made for past treatments if these were known, while the recto was assigned to the current restoration.

Within this section any structural treatments like lining a canvas or rejoining a panel were described. Furthermore the solvents used for varnish removal were noted, and products used for the restoration phase, for filling and retouching, were reported. Special attention was given to the varnish applied in the final stage of the treatment. On the reverse of the folio there was space for other comments and the date when the current restoration was done. Kuiper also instigated photographic documentation for each painting. Photos were taken before and after treatment. Both the negatives and prints were kept with the written documentation. Kuiper adapted this system when he moved to the Rijksmuseum in 1970. The new folio was slightly larger in size. The contents were predominantly the same however a new section was allocated for the solvents used for the removal of overpaint.

Kuiper's systematic approach to documentation allows current conservators to connect the treatments described by him with evidence that they observe on the paintings. Moreover, a clear knowledge of the products used leads to a better comprehension of the influence of the treatments on the artwork. This is crucial when defining a new treatment.

### ***Ethical considerations***

During his time as a conservator Kuiper advocated that natural products should be used for treatments where possible. Products that were inert to the painting itself and often found within the materials used by the artist. He rarely used synthetic products since he felt that the effect they could have on the painting in the long term was still unknown or had not yet been researched adequately. He did not want to use paintings which formed an important part of the Dutch cultural heritage as objects on which to experiment with new unknown products. Natural products already had a long history of use as conservation materials, and their effect in the long term was well known.[12] Synthetic materials were only used as a last resort when he felt natural products were not sufficient for the task at hand. In this sense Kuiper can be considered rather cautious. In the same period that saw the development of cold lining techniques in Denmark by Bent Hacke and locally by V.R. Mehra, Kuiper never considered using any other lining adhesive than the wax-resin until the end of his life.

The intent of the artist was paramount to Kuiper and he had great respect for the authenticity of an artwork. By interpreting his written documentation, it becomes clear what Kuiper considered to be the artist's intent and the authenticity of the artwork. Therefore when treating a painting Kuiper tried to return the artwork to its original state. The restoration of Hendrick Ter Brugghens' *The adoration of the Kings* (oil paint on canvas, 1619) owned by the Rijksmuseum illustrated this viewpoint.[13] This painting consisted of four horizontal pieces of canvas; the two central sections were equally wide, with two additional sections of canvas of an even width to the outer sections. It shows a seemingly well balanced composition, placing the Virgin Mary, the Christ Child and the Three Kings in a central position. Prior to making any decisions regarding treatment, Kuiper investigated the painting with the naked eye, stereomicroscope, x-radiography, infrared photography, paint cross-sections and carried out a thread count. This careful study showed that the painting had been heavily overpainted in the past and that the two canvas strips present on the top and bottom sides were of a different thread count than the central piece. Kuiper at this stage concluded that these were not original.[14] Firstly Kuiper carried out the structural treatment before going on to clean the painting. He decided to keep the additions, lining them with the rest of the painting because he felt that these might have been added with the consent of Ter Brugghen himself.[15] After proceeding with the varnish removal Kuiper came to a different conclusion. He noted that the ground applied to the center pieces did not extend over the seams of the two external canvases. Besides a signature was found under overpaint in the lower left of the central section of canvas during the varnish removal.[16] The placement of the signature above the seam attaching the lower canvas piece clearly suggested to Kuiper that the two external canvas pieces were non original. Kuiper valued the artist original intention more than the history of the painting. After this conclusion he decided to remove the additions. These were however saved. After treatment the painting was for the first time exhibited at the Rijksmuseum in 1971. A photograph of the untreated painting with the additions was placed next to the original in this exhibition.

Reversibility was also very important to Kuiper. During his time as a conservator he reflected about the consequences of each step made during treatment. He strove to make each treatment as reversible as possible. Looking back on his decisions Kuiper's opinions can be debated.

Further knowledge of materials and processes have left his choices open to discussion. However his methodological approach is still a valid. Kuiper exclusively used wax-resin lining as an adhesive. His continued use of it was already criticised by his contemporaries and certainly nowadays this is no longer considered a viable lining adhesive due to its negative effects with regard to both impregnation of all the layers in a paintings laminate and the use of heat during application. This treatment can no longer be called reversible according to modern standards and was even disputed when Kuiper was working.[17] As mentioned Kuiper placed no great trust in the new lining techniques that were becoming common place.[18] According to Kuiper the new methods of lining aimed only to solve specific individual problems presented by the painting and could not provide in one go a stable structure.[19] Kuiper felt that the structural integrity of the painting was paramount. He believed that the new methods of lining with synthetic products could not provide sufficient structural stability because the products did not impregnate the original materials improving consolidation of laminate structure. He felt that this was only achieved by using a hot melt adhesive such as wax-resin. Furthermore because this was a natural product with a long history of use, he gave this material preference.[20] Thus the wax-resin lining was, according to Kuiper, an integral procedure that solved problems of delamination between ground and canvas as well as providing structural strenght to the whole canvas.

In this context the term reversibility had a different connotation for Kuiper. He probably intended by stating that linings were reversible that the supplementary canvas could be removed easily on reheating the adhesive. This off course is very different from modern philosophy by which a reversible lining intends the removal of all additional material including the adhesive component. Kuiper disregarded the impregnation of the adhesive into the laminate structure of the painting as requiring reversibility, probably because he felt that this remedial action was neccesary. However from his own manuscripts it appeared that he was under the impression that any impregnated adhesive could be removed with *"filter paper, solvents and heat."*[21] Remnants of wax-resin on the surface can be removed with the appropriate solvent and filter paper but this will not extract the materials within.

### ***Treatments***

Due to Kuiper's dilligent record keeping it is easy to reconstruct his treatment methodology. These reports are kept in the archives of the Mauristhuis and the Rijksmuseum. The current study used as source 83 restoration reports. From these 83 reports Kuiper's standard practice for both panel paintings and cavases can be esthablished. [22]

### ***Linings***

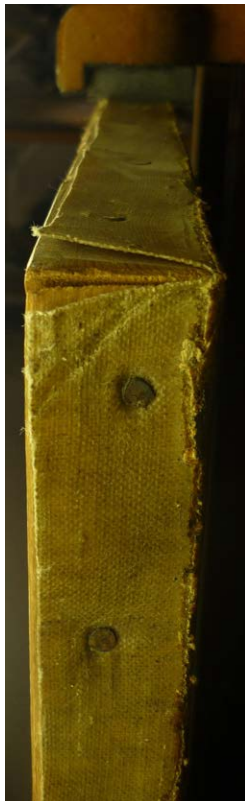
Kuiper described in his reports the different actions with regard to lining. He distinguished between the removal of an old lining or performing a new lining. He also listed products used.

He rarely described why it was neccesary to remove these linings. Mostly linings that were removed were glue-paste linings. Kuiper believed that in these cases Venice Turpentine had been added to the lining adhesive mixture, which he felt produced additional tension. Old linings were removed with *"heat, a knife and xylenes,"* or *"heat, a knife and glue."*[23] Sometimes he wrote down *"mechanically removed,"* or *"removed dry."* He probably meant that the lining canvas had been removed only with a knife and perhaps with some heat but without the use of a solvent. Kuiper usually used a special *"checkerboard method"* to remove glue-paste linings. The lining canvas would be divided in squares like on a checkerboard. On alternate squares he would put then a small solution of *"weak glue,"* this prohibited deformations arising in the original canvas. The diluted glue was supposed to regenerate the existent glue so the lining canvas could be easily removed from the original canvas.[24]

As said above Kuiper had always used a wax-resin lining adhesive. The way he performed the lining is called the Dutch method.[25] This method was developed by Nicholas Hopman in the mid-nineteenth century.[26] Through Hopmans' son, William Antonij Hopman, the method gradually spread through Europe as he instructed other conservators in this technique. What Hopman discovered was that a heated mixture of wax-resin (also sometimes with an additive) could be placed

in a molten state on the reverse of a canvas to which a second linen canvas was adhered as a reinforcement. The bond between the two canvases was created by heating the mixture. The mixture served as an adhesive and at the same time impregnated the original paint packet so that in one treatment the entire painting was stabilised.[27] According to Kuiper *"symptoms such as persistent blistering, degenerated linen, weakening of the primer, deformations due to climate changes and damage of mechanical nature"* could all be remedied by wax-resin lining a painting.[28]

Wax-resin linings were still widely used in the mid twentieth century in many western countries, many conservators moving away from hand lining to the use of a hot table by the end of the century. Kuiper did not like to use this table and almost always used hot irons to adhere the two canvases. He never liked the result when a painting had been lined on a vacuum hot table and according to Margit Kuiper he said he could always see it when the table had been used.[29] Kuiper carefully considered the components of the lining adhesive. While he always used beeswax, the type of resin and the proportion of wax to resin changed over his career. When he was working for the Mauritshuis he used dammar and beeswax but did not state the proportion that was used. By the time he arrived at the Rijksmuseum he replaced the dammar with colophony and also noted using a mixture of 5:2, so 5 parts of beeswax and 2 parts colophony. Unfortunately he did not note the reason why the change from dammar to colophony occurred, nor the manner in which the proportions should be measured. Kuiper never used additives in his wax-resin mixture. Additives such as elemi or Venice Turpentine, were commonly incorporated to improve performance and workability of the mixture. Kuiper felt that these, and specifically elemi, instead of plasticising the mixture made it very hard and therefore difficult to remove. For this reason he never included this as an additive.[30] A typical characteristic for the linings carried out by Kuiper was that he would cut away the excess canvas in the corner instead of folding it before attaching the lined canvas to the stretcher (see figure no.2).



**02.** The lining canvas has been cut away in the corner by Luitsen Kuiper.  
(Photo taken by the author, with the courtesy of the Mauritshuis, The Hague.  
Painting: Rachel Ruysch, *Flowers in a vase*, 1700, canvas, 79,5 x 60,2 cm.  
Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis.)

### ***Marouflages and transfers***

Marouflages and transfers were not common practice for Kuiper, but were carried out when he felt these were necessary. In his time at the Mauritshuis he undertook three marouflages and one transfer, and at the Rijksmuseum only one transfer.

For a particular case in the Mauritshuis, a painting that he had relined six months previously without removing the first lining canvas required further treatment because it appeared that this canvas *"was pulling again."*[31] The interpretation of his terminology here is not clear, however it is thought that he

meant delamination between the two canvases, probably resulting from the addition of Venetian turpentine to the original lining adhesive mixture of wax and resin. To solve this problem he did not see any other solution than to adhere the canvas, together with both lining canvases, to a Masonite® hardboard. Masonite® is the brand name for a fiber board manufactured from wood waste deriving from wood processing companies. The process was developed in 1926 by Mr. W.H. Mason. Wood waste is chopped into smaller pieces after which this will subsequently be turned into fibers using a combination of steam and pressure. This fiber mass will be further pressed into plates, producing a rough side and a smooth side.[32] Kuiper applied a wax-resin mixture to the rough side of the Masonite® and laid the canvas on top. In one of the three cases he mentions, had the ratio of the wax and resin. This was 2/3 beeswax and 1/3 dammar.

As mentioned Kuiper rarely performed transfers. In the one instance at the Mauritshuis he stated in the documentation that there were large, extensive tears in the original canvas. The canvas was in such a bad condition that it could no longer function as a support. Initially he applied a double wax-resin lining but was unsatisfied with the result. He then proceeded to carry out a much more drastic treatment; he removed both lining canvases, the original canvas and the ground layer, leaving the paint layers intact. These were again adhered to a hardboard. Why he also had removed the ground was not noted. Kuiper only carried out one other transfer, while at the Rijksmuseum. He probably abandoned performing marouflages and transfers because these treatments do not reflect his thoughts on reversibility.

### ***Structural treatment of panel paintings***

In both the Mauritshuis and the Rijksmuseum seven panels were treated for structural work.[33] Kuiper removed the cradles from three panels at the Mauritshuis and from one at the Rijksmuseum. In these cases Kuiper often only applied a layer of wax on the reverse of the painting. He thought this would be enough to keep the panel from moving.[34]

Kuiper used animal (rabbit skin) glue to re-join separated boards, which complied with his view to only use natural products. However, when treating splits in a board his approach was different. In these cases he often used commercial products. Kuiper used for this purpose Gupa®.[35] Gupa® is the commercial name for nitrocellulose mixed with wood powder which can have different coarsenesses. [36] Another synthetic product he also used for the gluing of cracks was Cetaflex®. Cetaflex® is a polyvinyl acetate dispersion glue which is produced by CetaBever®. Kuiper often added cork powder to Cetaflex® and used this interchangeable with Gupa®. Kuiper continued to use these products throughout his career, not changing the way he re-glued panels and splits in any way.

### ***Consolidation of paint***

Kuiper used exclusively animal (rabbit skin) glue to consolidate flaking paint. Flattening was achieved with warmth and pressure applied by a hot spatula. In the current research project, information regarding consolidation was only found in four treatment reports from the Rijksmuseum and none in the reports from the Mauritshuis. It is unclear why he did not carry out consolidation as a separate action in his early career, but it is thought that this is linked to the amount of paintings lined. Though Kuiper worked for a shorter period at the Mauritshuis, and, in this current project not all the reports of his treatments at the Rijksmuseum were studied, it seems that Kuiper carried out less linings in his latter career. [37] As mentioned, linings carried out by Kuiper were intended to impregnate the original laminate structure, in turn consolidating loose paint. Thus, it appears that in his later career, consolidation was seen as a separate, individual action that was applied when necessary.

### ***Used solvents and mixtures for varnish removal***

It seems from the treatment reports from both museums that ethanol, oil of turpentine and dimethyl formamide are the three most commonly used solvents for varnish removal. When Kuiper started his

job at the Rijksmuseum he made an extra section for the removal of old overpaint in the treatment report. The solvents he used mostly for the removal of old overpaint were oil of turpentine and dimethyl formamide. Mechanical removal of overpaints stubborn to solvent swelling was also used for this purpose. He probably used the same solvents for the removal of overpaint also during the time he worked for the Mauristhuis but this was not reported.

During the period he worked for the Rijksmuseum the use of acetone for varnish removal increased and he introduced the occasional use of rosemary oil as an addition to the solvents. Kuiper believed that rosemary oil *“reduced the aggressiveness of the solvents and helped dissolve the resin particles that are present in the old varnish layer.”*

Ratios of mixtures were also mentioned in the treatment reports; it is presumed that he is reporting volume to volume ratios. The most polar solutions consisted of mixtures of ethanol and oil of turpentine. Current study has shown that these have the highest tendency to swell aged oil paint.[38] He had used this combination of solvents in different ratios namely in “1:1,” “2:1” and “3:1.”; the ratio varied per painting depending upon the individual requirements of that varnish. It is clear that Kuiper considered each case separately and adjusted his cleaning technique to comply.

Kuiper also reports adding ammonium hydroxide ( $\text{NH}_4\text{OH}$ ) to the solvent mixture to increase solvent action where necessary. Kuiper uses the common term ‘ammonia’ to refer to ammonium hydroxide. Ammonium hydroxide is an alkali reagent that had been commonly used to remove old overpaint.[39] He used mixtures of *“acetone, ethanol and ammonia 2:5:3”* and *“Dimethyl formamide + ethanol, acetone and ammonia 2:2:1.”* Another mixture with dimethyl formamide had been used in the ratio *“ethanol, acetone and dimethyl formamide 1:1:2”* and *“dimethyl formamide and amyl acetate 3:1.”*

As described above Kuiper continually used dimethyl formamide as a solvent for varnish and overpaint removal. This solvent is nowadays not recommended because it can swell the oil and makes the binder liquid. Helmut Ruhemann names dimethyl formamide in his book *“The cleaning of paintings”* as a product which is generally used to remove overpaint. However, he stated that the product should not be used. [40] Further, it has a long retention time which allows it to remain for a long time within the paint layer again promoting swelling. It turns out that Kuiper was aware of the negative effects that some solvents may have. During the restoration of the *Adoration of the Kings* by Hendrick ter Brugghen, the varnish was only partially removed because *“the remainder of this varnish could provide some protection during the removal of overpaint, which will be treated intensively with solvents.”*[41] Although Kuiper knew about negative effects from using highly polar solvents, he probably thought by reducing the exposure time of the paint to these solvents, the effect was also limited and thus no threat to the original oil paint layer.

### ***The method of varnish removal***

It appeared that Kuiper developed his own method for the removal of an aged varnish. His methodology is only known for the period that he worked for the Rijksmuseum. Kuiper's documentation contained only references to materials used, however interviews with his former colleagues and students has revealed his working practice.

He would start by imaging how the painting would look after the varnish had been removed. The whole painting had to be visualised before the actual varnish removal could begin. Any problematic areas, overpainted areas and the determination of the varnish would be detected during this phase. All diagnostic techniques, such as the stereomicroscope and observations using UV-light, would be utilised.[42] Then he would proceed with testing different solvents and mixtures to see which one would be the best to remove the varnish. These test areas were small in size. The varnish was removed using a large wad of cotton with the chosen solvent on it. The cotton wad was held in the palm of the hand or on a wooden stick and wiped over the surface, often in a circular movement. Immediately after, the activity of this solvent would be “stopped” with a similarly large wad of cotton containing oil of turpentine. This cotton wad would be held with medical scissors and not on a wooden stick. According to Kuiper the oil of turpentine was supposed to neutralise the strong cleaning power of the solvent. He thought that the cleaning action should be as fast as possible so that the paint layer would not be exposed to strong solvents for a long period. A more gradual cleaning arose with this

method.[43]

The use of oil of turpentine as a neutralising agent was not only used by Kuiper. This technique is also reported by Helmut Ruhemann; he mentions that he used it to “*make strong solvents more mild.*”[44] However, today it is known that two or more solvents used together can produce a mixture that can swell aged oil paint considerably more than when the solvents are used separately.[45]

### ***Fillings***

As a filling material Kuiper normally used a mixture of chalk and (animal) glue filling throughout his career. He used the same filler for both canvas and panel paintings. There are however some exceptions. He switched then to a filling made of wax and resin which sometimes contained pigments. In one treatment report he wrote down why he made the decision to discard the chalk and glue filling. In this case he needed more flexibility from the filler. Kuiper's choice for filling materials reflects his philosophy of using only natural products. Again the documentation found in the Rijksmuseum is slightly fuller than that in his earlier career, though as usual exact information is scarce. Kuiper mentions in one report the ingredients used for the filler. It states that champagne chalk was mixed with an animal glue, though the proportions are not given. The dried filler was sealed with shellac.[46] Interviews with his colleagues and students revealed that this was standard practice, which is possibly why Kuiper failed to mention this in each individual report.

### ***Retouchings***

Kuiper maintained an individual approach to retouching. He would initially work up the colour on top of the sealed chalk and glue fillings using an commercial egg tempera paint from Rowney®; due to its reversibility when aged egg tempera retouchings were applied only on top of filled areas. Final retouchings were applied in drained Talens® oil paint.[47] The fluidity of the paint was enhanced by adding dammar varnish.[48] Kuiper drained the oil paint himself by putting little blobs of oil paint on blotting paper. The blotting paper was adhered to his palette. His thoughts behind this system were that the oil caused the darkening of oil paint retouches and thus should be eliminated as much as possible from the retouching media.[49] Examples of the discolouration of oil medium containing retouchings from the past were widely known. By replacing the oil with a dammar varnish he thought he could avoid the darkening of his retouchings and at the same time making them more reversible. The amount of oil that could be drained by putting the paint on blotting paper is however questionable but it has been said by conservators that his retouchings are easy to remove in the few cases where paintings treated by Kuiper have been conserved again.[50]



**03.** An example of a palette used by Luitsen Kuiper. The blotting paper is visible on the left with on top the little blobs of oil paint. (Photo taken by the author, with courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

The information about the layer build up of Kuiper's retouchings comes mainly from his colleagues and students who worked with him during the years in that he worked for the Rijksmuseum. Little information is known about this subject from the time Kuiper worked for the Mauritshuis since all of the people who had worked with him from that period passed away and the information in the treatment reports is scarce. There are however two treatment reports from 1962 and 1964 where Kuiper described the use of an "*drained oil paint*" and "*drained oil paint in varnish*." [51] According to these notations it seems that the products Kuiper used to make his retouchings stayed the same throughout his career. What probably changed was that he applied his retouchings more precisely during the period he worked for the Rijksmuseum. According to one of his former students he would never overpaint an area, this was out of the question.[52] However, recently a conservator from the Mauritshuis found, during a varnish removal, large areas of overpaint, presumably applied by Kuiper.[53] This indicates that Kuiper's philosophy regarding the authenticity of a painting developed over time, probably to comply with the changing viewpoints of his contemporaries.

### **Varnish**

Before retouching Kuiper always applied an isolation varnish to separate the original paint layer from his retouchings. When the retouching was finished Kuiper would let the retouchings dry for two months before he applied the final varnish layer.[54] The final varnish layer was always brushed on. That is the reason why the drying time of the retouchings was relatively long since the drained oil contains the same varnish as the final varnish layer, and would thus be sensitive to the solvents used to apply the varnish layer unless oxidation and cross-linking had occurred.

Almost without exception, he applied a varnish made with dammar dissolved in oil of turpentine. In some early cases, Kuiper added poppy seed oil (in the ratio dammar:poppy seed oil 10:1) to the varnish. The reason for this addition is not clear and is not reported by Kuiper. However, it could be that it was added to the varnish because it yellows less than dammar over time and it makes the varnish slightly more flexible. The drying time of the varnish also increases so when the

varnish was applied it could be brushed out longer than without the addition.

This varnish choice was noted in reports dating from the time he worked at the Mauritshuis but was not found in reports from the period when he worked at the Rijksmuseum. However, one of his former colleagues from the Rijksmuseum mentioned when interviewed that poppy seed oil was a standard addition at this time.[55] Again, it seems that Kuiper did not write down standard practice in his treatment reports.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout his working career, Kuiper stayed close to his personal viewpoints and the responsibilities he felt he had towards the paintings he treated. This is reflected in his working practice which can be reconstructed from the documentation, interviews with his colleagues and students and from the paintings themselves.

Despite criticism he at times received, for example for his continual use of the wax-resin lining technique, Kuiper always followed his own methodology. He was however a conservator in a time when much was changing in the field of conservation. Kuiper was often sceptical of these changes, feeling that he needed actual proof that there would be no problems with future reversibility before he would implement change in his own methods and products. He felt that important Dutch heritage should not be experimented with, preferring to continue to use treatments and products with an established use and result. With such thoughts in mind, he cannot be considered an innovative conservator, but instead rather cautious. This is also reflected when studying the treatment reports. They show that Kuiper did not change much in practice throughout his career.

From an ethical standpoint, it seems that the products Kuiper used were carefully chosen. He considered the concept of reversibility and how this could be translated to the actual treatment of paintings. For example, he had seen badly discoloured retouchings caused by the use of pure oil paint. He believed that no other paint medium was suitable for retouching oil paintings. Kuiper knew that this material discoloured on aging and thus changed its properties to comply with his vision on reversibility by replacing the majority of the medium with dammar varnish.

After researching Luitsen Kuiper's treatment reports and the information taken from the interviews with his former colleagues and students, it seems that his restoration methods show both similarities and differences between those used today. Many of the solvents Kuiper used are still in use today; but over the years, research in the field of conservation has increased conservators' knowledge of solvent action, thus certain products and mixtures used by Kuiper have been discarded. For example, dimethyl formamide, oil of turpentine and the wax-resin adhesive no longer belongs in the conservator's toolbox, and have been replaced with less toxic, safer alternatives.

Many of the paintings treated by Kuiper have not been restored since. For further research on long-term effects of the treatments performed by Kuiper, these paintings could be used to compare the information found in the treatment reports with the actual treatment found on the painting itself. This would give information about how precise Kuiper had been when describing his treatments. Maybe it could even be possible to find some specific characteristics of treatments that were only carried out by Kuiper so that the hand of the conservator could then be recognised on the painting itself.

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[1] See for the interviews: Knaap, van der, F.W.C., 2011: *"Luitsen Kuiper, de praktijk van een restaurator."* p. 112-142. (Thesis written for the University of Amsterdam, available at the library of the

University of Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum and Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed or contact the author.)

[2] Information taken from an interview with Mariet Kuiper, widow of Luitsen Kuiper, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.

[3] Information taken from an interview with Michel van de Laar, senior paintings conservator at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.

[4] <http://www.studeren.uva.nl/ma-restauratiekunde/>

[5] Kuiper, L., 1973: *"Restaureren van schilderijen,"* Van Dishoeck, Bussum. (Also published in English, under the title *"Restoration of paintings."*)

[6] See for more information about the painting and the attack: Hijmans, W. e.a. 1976: *"Rembrandts Nachtwacht. Het vendel van Frans Banning Cocq, de geschiedenis van een schilderij,"* A.W. Sijthoff, Leiden.

[7] Ibidem, p. 112.

[8] Information taken from an interview with Mariet Kuiper, widow of Luitsen Kuiper, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.

[9] Information found in the annual report of the Rijksmuseum, 1982.

[10] Comment by Margit Kuiper, daughter and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, November 2010.

[11] Ruhemann, H., 1968: *"The cleaning of paintings,"* Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers, New York. p. 69.

[12] Information taken from Kuiper's personal documentation which is in possession of Margit Kuiper: *"Some thoughts on the developments of the lining procedure."* ( *"Enkele gedachten over de ontwikkelingen van het doubleren."*) unpublished document.

[13] Kuiper, L., 1971: "Restauratieverslag van Hendrick ter Brugghen's Aanbidding der koningen," from *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, jaargang 19, vol. 3. p. 119-130.

[14] Ibidem, p. 119-130.

[15] Ibidem, p. 127.

[16] Ibidem, p. 127.

[17] Wax-resin linings were disputed during the *Conference on Comparative lining techniques* held in Greenwich in 1974 and the *International Council of Museums- Committee for Conservation 4th Triennial Meeting* held in Venice in 1975.

[18] See for these lining techniques:

\* Berger, G.A., 2004: "Lining of a torn painting with Beva 371," from *Lining Paintings, papers from the Greenwich Conference on Comparative Lining techniques*, London. p. 49-62.

\* Mehra, V.R., 1975: "Further developments in cold-lining (nap-bond system)," from *International Council of Museums- Committee for Conservation 4th Triennial Meeting*, Venice.

[19] Information taken from Kuiper's personal documentation which is in possession of Margit Kuiper: *"Some thoughts on the developments of the lining procedure."* ( *"Enkele gedachten over de ontwikkelingen van het doubleren."*) document is unpublished.

[20] Information taken from Kuiper's personal documentation which is in possession of Margit Kuiper:

"Some thoughts on the developments of the lining procedure." ( "Enkele gedachten over de ontwikkelingen van het doubleren.") document is unpublished.

[21] Information taken from Kuiper's personal documentation which is in possession of Margit Kuiper: "Notes of the meeting held on Friday June 16th 1978, about the restoration of "Self portrait with a grey hat" by Van Gogh." ("Notulen van de vergadering gehouden op vrijdag 16 juni 1978, inzake de restauratie "zelfportret met de grijze hoed" van Van Gogh") Unpublished document.

[22] From the Mauritshuis there was a total of 41 reports. From these 41 paintings there were 23 canvases, 17 panels and one painting on copper. From the Rijksmuseum there was a total of 42 reports. From these 42 paintings there was a total of 19 canvases, 23 panels and one painting on copper.

[23] Information comes from the archive of the Mauritshuis. Treatment reports of the paintings inventory numbers: 0090, 0151, 0705.

[24] Comment of Margit Kuiper, daughter and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, November 2010.

[25] The way Kuiper did his linings is very similar to the technique that George Messens described in a short paper. See for this: Messens, G., 2004: "Handlining with wax-resin using an iron," from *Lining Paintings, papers from the Greenwich Conference on Comparative Lining techniques*, Londen. p. 76.

[26] Marvelde, te, M., 2001: "How Dutch is the Dutch method?" from: *Past Practice-Future Prospects*. The British Museum Occasional Paper, vol. 145. p. 147.

[27] Ibidem, p. 146.

[28] Kuiper, L., 1973: p. 23.

[29] Information taken from an interview with Margit Kuiper, daughter and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.

[30] Information taken from Kuiper's personal documentation which is in possession of Margit Kuiper: "Some thoughts on the developments of the lining procedure." ( "Enkele gedachten over de ontwikkelingen van het doubleren.") Unpublished document.

[31] Information comes from the archive of the Mauritshuis. Treatment report of the painting's inventory number: 0795.

[32] Kickken, S., 2006: "*Vademecum plaatmaterialen*," SDU uitgevers, Den Haag. p. 133.

[33] Information comes from the archive of the Mauritshuis and the Rijksmuseum. Treatment reports of the paintings inventory numbers of the Mauritshuis: 0117, 0225, 0430, 0433, 0659, 0937, 0974.

Rijksmuseum inventory numbers SK-: A 4044, A 1244, A 4822, A 3930, A 1598, A 1718, A 3241.

[34] Kuiper, L., 1973: "*Restaureren van schilderijen*," Van Dishoeck, Bussum, p. 22.

[35] Information taken from an interview with Martin Bijl, former colleague of Luitsen Kuiper now private conservator, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2011.

[36] Information taken from the archive of the Mauritshuis, painting inventory number 0225.

[37] Information taken from an interview with Martin Bijl, former colleague of Luitsen Kuiper now private conservator, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2011.

[38] See for more information: Phenix, A., 2002: "Building models: Comparative swelling powers of organic solvents on oil paint and the cleaning of paintings," uit "*V&A Conservation Journal*," Vol. 40 (Spring).p. 18.

- [39] Ruhemann, H., 1968: p. 196.
- [40] Ruhemann, H., 1968: p. 206.
- [41] Kuiper, L., 1971: p. 128.
- [42] Information taken from an interview with Margit Kuiper, daughter and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.
- [43] Information taken from an interview with Michel van de Laar, senior paintings conservator at the Rijksmuseum and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.
- [44] Ruhemann, H., 1968: p. 190.
- [45] Hedley G., 1980: "Solubility Parameters and Varnish Removal: A Survey," *The Conservator*, No. 4. p. 16.
- [46] Information taken from an interview with Michel van de Laar, senior paintings conservator at the Rijksmuseum and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 .
- [47] Information taken from an interview with Michel van de Laar, senior paintings conservator at the Rijksmuseum and former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2011.
- [48] Information taken from an interview with Manja Zeldenrust, Head of the paintings conservation department at the Rijksmuseum, 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2011.
- [49] Kuiper, L., 1973: p. 26.
- [50] Comment of Sabrina Meloni, paintings conservator at the Mauritshuis, March 2011.
- [51] Information taken from the archive of the Museum Mesdag, painting's inventory numbers 74 and 265.
- [52] Information taken from an interview with Michel van de Laar, paintings conservator at the Rijksmuseum, former student of Luitsen Kuiper, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2011
- [53] Overpaint found on the paintings from the Mauritshuis, inventory numbers 0459 en 0460, comment of Sabrina Meloni, paintings conservator at the Mauritshuis, March 2011.
- [54] Kuiper, L., 1971: "Restauratieverslag van Hendrick ter Brugghen's Aanbidding der koningen," from *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, jaargang 19, vol. 3. p. 131.
- [55] Information taken from an interview with Martin Bijl, former colleague of Luitsen Kuiper, now private conservator, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2011.

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### Attachments (3)

[03 Palette used by Kuiper.jpg](#) - on Apr 22, 2012 by [ArtHS Editor](#) (Version 2)

[01 Kuiper retouching.jpg](#) - on Apr 22, 2012 by [ArtHS Editor](#) (Version 2)

[02 Corner canvas.jpg](#) - on Apr 22, 2012 by [ArtHS Editor](#) (Version 2)

## Shaped by collaboration: The development of conservation training

by Kristin deGhetaldi

The moment that the art historian, conservator and scientist see the work of art as a mutual focal point, then the sensitivity and sophistication of the approach will be commensurate with the significance of the artist's work for our society.

- John Brealey [1]

In 1948, the director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, John Walker, found himself in a rather precarious position regarding two paintings attributed to Jan Vermeer. [2] The authenticity of *The Smiling Girl* and *The Lacemaker* was being vehemently disputed by a number of art historians, compelling Walker to write to the restorer Stephen Pichetto, who had treated the works in 1940 before the paintings had officially entered the Galleries collection:

'The Smiling Girl' by Vermeer, in the Mellon Collection is being attacked as a well-known forgery. We have discussed the picture often, and at various times during the past several years I have asked you to publish your technical reasons for believing this picture to be authentic, as well as your technical reasons for supporting the attribution to Vermeer of the other picture, 'The Lacemaker', which has also been questioned. [3]

Walker's anxious tone strikes an empathetic cord in the hearts of young, aspiring art historians, yet through his earnest request he demonstrates considerable foresight for his time. His direct reference to "technical" evidence echoes the ramifications of the famous Van Meegeren trial that had transpired the previous year. Although it would be more than ten years before the two paintings were thoroughly analyzed [4], Walker immediately took the necessary steps to form a research center that would meet the Gallery's technical and analytical needs. By 1950, the National Gallery of Art had established the Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh with Dr. Robert Feller as its leading scientist. [5]

In the 1950s Walker did not have the luxury of choosing amongst a contingent of graduates from recognized graduate-level conservation programs, at least not from North America. Walker was seeking expertise from someone who had by then examined and restored hundreds of paintings, a man that may have been able to provide concrete information regarding the materiality of the two pictures in question. During this period, fewer institutions were turning to an assembled "council of sages" to tackle issues regarding authenticity as well as the cleaning and repair of artworks. [6] Such groups, often guiding the direction of a restoration process, would include professional artists or individuals unfamiliar with historic art materials and techniques. With the ever-developing role of science, however, curators, directors, and scholars began to turn to chemists, physicists, and x-radiographers for specific information relating to the materiality of artworks. Even before the close of the Second World War, the role of the restorer had begun to evolve into a position that demanded far more than satisfactory hand skills.

Some twenty years prior to Walker's dilemma, professionals in the art world suddenly began to turn their attention toward the restoration profession, questioning the age-old tradition of apprenticeship training in workshops. In many ways this was born out of the cleaning controversies that had seized the National Gallery in London, initiated for the most part by the newly restored *Philip IV of Spain in Brown and Silver* by Velázquez. [7] The damage inflicted upon Europe's cultural heritage during the Second World War, followed by the famed van Meegeren trials, and finally the disastrous Florence Flood in 1966 have all helped to shape the conservation graduate programs of today. Twenty-first-century students must demonstrate an impressive level of education and dedication to the field of conservation before they are even considered for an interview at a graduate program. North American schools, for example, typically receive more than 400 inquiries each year regarding the lengthy admission process. [8] On average each school will interview between 20 and

40 individuals, ultimately accepting only 8 to 10 students. Often students will interview two or three times, improving their dossiers with every year. Many have two or three undergraduate degrees, graduated summa/magna cum laude, are versed in at least two languages, and participated in study abroad programs. This is a far cry from the profile of restorers during Stephen Pichetto's time and perhaps explains why he remained relatively mute during the investigation of the Vermeer forgeries at the National Gallery. Students applying to graduate-level conservation programs, including those outside of North America, are asked to fulfill a lengthy list of perquisite coursework, a list that continues to evolve in response to the needs of the art world and our cultural heritage.

The foundation behind these prerequisites can be traced back to the 1920s at the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge [9]. Under the direction of Edward W. Forbes the museum became a place where art history students, like the young John Walker, were confronted with original works of art in a laboratory-like setting and exposed to the scientific side of art research. [10] Many have commended Forbes's ingenuity as a museum director, pressuring those around him to approach projects in an interdisciplinary fashion "based on truly scientific principles." [11] As early as 1904, Forbes had begun to collect pigments, resins, balsams, gums and other historic art materials from all over the world, a collection that he eventually used as a teaching aid in his own courses on painting techniques. [12] Headed by George Stout, this was the first North American center that fostered a teaching environment that was truly interdisciplinary, boasting its very own chemist and x-radiologist. [13] Officially founded in 1928 as the Department for Conservation and Technical Research, it has evolved into the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, a department that has continued to host young conservators through one-year internship programs. Edward Forbes's friendship with the associate director of the Museum, Paul Sachs, would also prove vital to the education of many soon-to-be curators and directors. To both Forbes and Sachs it was imperative that students be able to recognize forgeries and in addition identify previous restoration campaigns. Both men adopted a hands-on approach as instructors, Sachs taught his "Museum Course" seminar out of his own home [14], and Forbes taught a practical graduate course using real works of art: "Problems in Attribution in Light of Recent Developments in the Technical Study of Painting." [15] Another class offered by Forbes was the "Methods and Processes of Painting," known to the students as the "egg and plaster" course. [16] This memorable class allowed aspiring young art historians to try their hand at fresco, silverpoint, and tempera painting. A subsequent director of the Fogg, Agnes Mongan, recounted her memory of Forbes as an instructor at the 1977 Annual Meeting for the American Institute of Conservation:

The Fogg egg and plaster course met at nine o'clock in the morning. Mr. Forbes' own private laboratory was off the big room in the place where the objects lab now is. In that room Mr. Forbes had all kinds of private experiments, many of them ones we might wonder at, but simple ones some were, that were so vivid that I am sure that I and my fellow students will never forget them. He had a series, for example, of newspapers that he was exposing gradually to sunlight. He had papers with various pigments also in light. One day he was putting out egg yolk, and other days he was making experiments with egg white. [17]

Forbes's courses were first offered in 1927 and he continued to educate Harvard students even after the hiatus caused by World War II. The program suddenly became an attractive option for many European scholars and professors seeking refuge or a temporary escape from the turmoil caused by the Nazi regime. Adolph Goldschmidt, a professor of art history at the University of Berlin, was no exception. Goldschmidt's "critical seeing" approach to teaching had already inspired a generation of notable scholars. [18] His approach was based primarily on "observational and analytical methods" that were "combined with a great enjoyment for artwork and with a feeling for its quality." [19] The Königlichen Museen hired Friedrich Rathgen, the first chemist ever to be employed by a museum, a few years before Goldschmidt had begun teaching in 1892. [20] Most art experts working in Berlin would have been aware of Rathgen's "Handbook of Conservation" which was in circulation as early as 1898. [21] Goldschmidt's appreciation for the natural sciences translated into a demanding classroom setting, where students were asked to describe objects with such detail as if they were "a fly crawling over the figure." [22] At the invitation of Paul Sachs, Goldschmidt participated in Harvard's program from 1927-28 and for a second time in 1930.

While Forbes, Stout, and Goldschmidt all shared a fascination with natural science, they remained devoutly connected with the world of art. Their teaching encouraged students to scrupulously examine objects put before them, asking questions relating to authenticity, materiality, and

conservation. By Goldschmidt's second sabbatical at Harvard, art specialists and historians in Europe began to discuss the examination and documentation processes involving artworks. Many began to implement changes in their own institutions, something that would eventually lead to the very first International Conference on the Examination and Conservation of Works of Art. [23] Sensing the importance of this congregation, Forbes would send George Stout to Rome in 1930 to attend the conference organized by the International Museum Office of the League of Nations. [24] For the first time in history, museum professionals and art experts began to discuss the need for international statutes that would eventually outline the education and training of conservators. Cesare Brandi, a restorer who would eventually become the head of the Istituto di Centrale in Rome, had recently introduced the concept of minimal intervention, demanding a new respect for the natural patina of an artwork. [25] Stout was no doubt heavily influenced and inspired by the discussions that took place at the meeting. "Artist-restorers" had begun to earn a bad reputation amongst professionals in the art world, a sentiment that Stout himself summarized in 1963:

The Rome conference of 1930 seems to have occurred at or near the end of an indefinitely long period of complacency with respect to the conservation of works of art. The central personages for generations had been the restorers, occasionally named artist-restorers. Most of them had gone through some kind of standard preparation in an academic art school. Beyond this the acquisition of lore or of tricks and trade secrets was accomplished through carried and different means and channels. Still it was a trade, a craft in which the craftsmen could lay claim to diverse and irregular funds of knowledge and ability. By 1930 there was a vocal disquiet about this; it was not good enough. Many art historians and a few curators and collectors complained and asked for more rigid standards of qualification for those who would practice as restorers. [26]

Upon his return Stout began a technical journal through the Chemical Foundation that was dedicated to topics in conservation entitled *Technical Studies in the Field of the Fine Arts*. [27] Working together with the Fogg's resident chemist Rutherford J. Gettens, Stout also published an encyclopedic handbook in 1942, a reference that continues to be used by students, scientists and art experts. [28] Five years later, Gettens and Stout drafted a proposal for the establishment of a formal training program at Harvard's museum, a concept that would take nearly a decade to manifest. [29]

Stout's international colleagues returned from the Rome conference with a similar mission. Over the next decade a series of graduate programs were founded, beginning first with the Courtauld Institute in London in 1934. [30] Helmut Ruhemann, one of the primary lecturers at the Courtauld and a restorer at the National Gallery in London, recounted his test to assess future conservators as follows:

I have 32 x-ray photographs, 16 of them from original Van Goghs and 16 from the forgeries made after these. I shuffle them together like a pack of cards and the candidate has to put the originals in one row and the imitations in another. [31]

Ruhemann sought students with a keen eye for condition and quality, as had Forbes before him. Ruhemann had been an early proponent of x-radiography at the Kaiser-Fredrich Museum in Berlin, a technique that had been used to examine paintings in Germany as early as the late 1890s. [32]

Ruhemann was forced to immigrate to London by 1933, a city that had begun to take the lead in implementing rules and regulations regarding cultural heritage. [33] In 1920 the British Museum founded its own scientific department, with the National Gallery following suit in 1934, recruiting Ian Rawlins as the chief Scientific Advisor. [34] Both collections had survived the First World War, although many objects that had been stored in London's underground tunnels or elsewhere in England were in dire need of conservation. [35] This prompted a new demand for trained conservators in London and throughout war ravaged Europe. By 1934 the Courtauld Institute had formed the first European conservation-training program that established its own scientific department the following year headed by the physicist Stephen Rees Jones. [36]

The Courtauld was soon followed by the Akademi der Bildenden Künste in Vienna (1936), the Doerner Institute in Munich (1938), the Istituto di Centrale in Rome (1943), the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1945), the Institut für Technologie der Malerei in Stuttgart (1949), and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1950). [37] Many of these European programs implemented entrance examinations or evaluations similar to Ruhemann's, recognizing the important role of science in the interpretation of artworks. By the end of the Second World War, students in

many of the training programs were well versed in analytical techniques such as pigment analysis and the x-radiography of paintings and objects. With repatriation efforts underway throughout Europe, the van Meegeren case suddenly became an international sensation, with the topic of fakes and forgeries pervading the art world. In 1947 Ian Rawlins joined Harold Plenderleith, a chemist from the British Museum, and Paul Coremans, a chemist hailing from the National Museum in Brussels, to aid in the examination of eight forgeries. [38] Coremans had gained a reputation for his scientific expertise in the art world and was praised by the art historian Erwin Panofsky for his ability to convince “the art historical lamb to dwell with the scientific wolf.” [39] Coremans would go on to publish a book on his experiences during the trial [40] and, like Goldschmidt, was invited to lecture at a number of American universities and institutions. Coremans’s visit to the United States influenced the future of American conservation training programs, and the proceedings of the trial impacted the direction of conservation education on an international scale. The in-trial discussions amongst Coremans, Rawlins, and Plenderleith have been cited as the true beginnings of the International Institute for Conservation. [41]

Yet even by the early 1950s, America was still without a recognized graduate training program dedicated to art conservation. Despite Stout’s formal plea to Arthur Pope, the then director of the Fogg, no formal degree program was established at the time and the concept was temporarily abandoned. [42] Budget cuts to the conservation department, Stout’s move to Worcester in 1947, and Gettens’s relocation in 1951 for the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian Institution scuttled plans for a training program at the Fogg. [43] Stout’s vision for a school was based on the metaphorical “three-legged stool,” ensuring that studio art, art history, and the sciences were emphasized in an equal, balanced manner. [44] Young people who wished to become a conservator were obliged to apprentice themselves to a practicing professional, and their horizons were limited by the skills of their mentors. Without an interdisciplinary teaching environment, young conservators were unlikely to understand the science of art materials and examination processes such as infrared reflectography.

Craig Hugh Smyth, the director of the Institute of Fine Arts in New York, was all too familiar with the importance of conservation. During World War Two, Smyth had been involved in transforming the Nazi party’s headquarters in Munich into a central repository for looted artworks, known today as the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte. [45] In collaboration with art historian Harry Bober and conservator Sheldon Keck, Smyth felt strongly that a conservation program could flourish under the jurisdiction of New York University. [46] Sheldon Keck, a former Fogg apprentice, had relocated to the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1934, establishing an art conservation laboratory with his wife Caroline. [47] Mrs. Keck had also trained in conservation at the Fogg and would eventually go on to publish three books including *How to Take Care of Your Pictures* (1954), *Handbook on the Care of Paintings* (1965), and *A Primer on Museum Security* (1966). [48] The Kecks’ continued the Fogg tradition of accepting and training apprentices within their Brooklyn laboratory. The Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University became the first American graduate conservation program, opening its doors in 1960. [49]

From its inception, the NYU program made high demands of its enrollees. The curriculum was tied into the Art History department; all conservation graduate students were required to earn an M.A. in Art History and then a certificate in art conservation. Majewski recounted the course requirements at a student conference in 1984:

During the first two years the program is highly structured. Students spend half their time studying art history and pass two written language exams in French and German and write two scholarly qualifying papers in art history of publishable character. At the same time they follow a course in the physics and chemistry of the same materials they are examining and conserving. They make use of microscopic and instrumental analytical procedures including spectrometry and x-ray diffraction analysis. [50]

Later faculty member John Brealey continued Goldschmidt’s tradition, encouraging students to spend ample time looking at actual artworks, committing minute details to memory and making note of the object’s condition. Brealey was greatly influenced by Goldschmidt’s teaching style and would later state that Goldschmidt was his “trainer’s-trainer.” [51]

The teachings of Stout, Gettens, and Forbes were perpetuated by the Sheldon and Caroline Keck. The Kecks trained interns in the as they continued to educate young conservators. They also stressed the importance of “reversibility” and photo-documentation in the curriculum. Forbes had first

emphasized the importance of reversible retouching during the restoration of Rogier van der Weyden's *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, voicing his concern that oil paints were being used to touch up an oil painting. [52] Sheldon Keck continued to promote Forbes's viewpoint noting, "all matter deteriorates, and so any repair made today might not be adequate tomorrow, and will have to be done over." [53] In addition, students were encouraged to adopt photography as a means of recording the progress of an artwork's conservation treatment. These important concepts continue to be implemented and emphasized in conservation programs today.

The field of conservation and the number of professional avenues for conservation training has grown considerably over the last 75 years. The increasing number of academically trained art conservators has helped to staff museums with professionals versed in ethical issues, sophisticated examination techniques, and treatment procedures. While all of these programs and their curricula continue to evolve there remains a need to foster interdisciplinary and collaborative work. Conservators and scientists continue to find new ways to examine artworks, and it has become easier to collect and amass large quantities of analytical data. Without guidance and inspiration from its sister fields, the prodigious reserve of technical information compiled by conservators may remain under-utilized and unnoticed. Art historians are often plagued with issues and questions that may be easily answered by their conservation counterparts. In 1993 Gerry Hedley stated the following, encouraging successive generations of scholars to capitalize on the expertise of their colleagues:

If the curator knows nothing of technique, and the conservator nothing of art history they will find it difficult to have a meaningful discussion. Perhaps we will learn to rejoice in the diversity that seeing similar great paintings, presented in different ways, offers to our visual perception. [54]

An improved level of scholarship can be born out of collaboration, giving rise to the new field of technical art history, described by Maryan Ainsworth to be "an enhanced and more scientific connoisseurship." [55] The National Gallery Technical Bulletin and the work of the Rembrandt Research Project are two outstanding examples of the results of this type of collaboration. Recent PhD programs in preservation studies and conservation science allow students and professionals to thoroughly investigate and address complicated issues such as the analysis of historic dyestuffs and the fading/degradation of pigments. From the art historical side, the University of Glasgow now offers a Masters degree in Technical Art History (directed by Dr. Erma Hermens) and the University of Delaware is presently spearheading a new Curatorial Track in Art History PhD program (directed Dr. David Stone). Perhaps one of the most important developments in collaboration is the new Summer Institute in Technical Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts Conservation Center at New York University in collaboration with the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, a program that has been designed for graduate students and professors in art history. Many of today's students in art history, unfortunately, are still unaware of the various ways conservation research can benefit their scholarly pursuits. The future direction of conservation training will be influenced by interactions and collaborations among scientists, art historians, and museum professionals and how they choose to make use of conservation resources. Thanks to the continual development of conservation training programs and expanding conservation science departments in many major museums, art professionals now have access to an overwhelming range of scientific tools and technical resources that can be used to tackle questions regarding connoisseurship and authenticity, something that John Walker would have certainly appreciated many years ago.

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pursuing a PhD in Preservation Studies from the University of Delaware, focusing on mixed media techniques used by early Quattrocento painters.

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## **The need for professionals in art conservation: The case of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the 1880s and 1890s**

by Marc S. Smith

In the United States, the very first museums opened their doors between the 1800s and the 1820s. These were small, non specialized facilities and they only attracted local visitors. It was not until the end of the Civil War, that the most prominent and internationally famous museums were founded. For Example, the well-known Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its doors in 1872. From the beginning, its collection was large and regrouped pieces donated by its generous patrons. The museum had enough wealth to help promote and finance its growth.

With sufficient capital at hand and a rapidly growing collection, the Metropolitan was in great need of qualified personnel to handle its investments and make its collection prosper in a structured fashion. Yet, art conservation had not yet entered higher education and no trained personnel were available. A museum, such as the Metropolitan, had to rely on the perspicacity of its founders and Board of Trustees to seek out individuals who had the ability to run an international level museum and in the meanwhile manage it themselves.

But what if the Board of Trustees were unable to find individuals who had the necessary experience and talent to run international museums? What happened if the philanthropists behind the museum's finances lacked the necessary knowledge of art conservation and, instead, applied business principles?

Through the example of the management of the Metropolitan Museum by its Board of Trustees in the 1880s and 1890s, it is possible to see the dilemmas that occurred in certain US museums before the professionalization of art conservation. Whether in choosing to open or not on Sundays, how to finance the museum and who to recruit as director, the Board of Trustees was detrimental in how a museum approached conservation, which was after all at the heart of their mission statement as public facilities. Recurring problems led to a radical transformation of how museums were conceived, managed and directed and paved the way to a new generation of professionals.

In a sense, this article deals with the beginnings of art conservation in high-ranking US museums. The goal is to see through different examples how US museums, and more specifically the Metropolitan Museum of Art, were managed before the appearance of university trained professionals and how this sometimes led to systemic problems, which sometimes took the shape of scandals. Scandals did not occur every day and were not prevalent to all museums, but they do allow to peer into the workings of a system which, in an absence of revelation, would remain concealed.

In addition, the 1870s represent a time when the United States truly began developing cultural facilities and by its size the Metropolitan Museum played a pivotal role in this network. The central position of the Metropolitan Museum does not make it symbolic of all museums, but it does show the existence of certain management principles which were put in place at the time. These were systemic logics which were inherited by the private and philanthropic nature of these facilities.

The Metropolitan Museum was founded, furnished and financed by wealthy New Yorkers. One of the most prominent philanthropists and long-standing trustees was J. P. Morgan. Much of his private collection was donated to the museum for its opening in February 1872 and for years Morgan remained a key figure in the administration of the museum. He was a famous collector of paintings, rare manuscripts and cultural artifacts and had purchased many valuable European pieces. His donations were both generous and of quality.[1]

J. P. Morgan was also a famous banker and was renowned worldwide. In his business career, he was known for having brought to life General Electric by a fusion of Edison General Electric and the Thomson-Houston Electric Company. He was also famous for having created the United States Steel Corporation, by bringing together the Carnegie Steel Company, the Federal Steel Company and

a multitude of smaller companies.[2] J. P. Morgan was a financial and corporate wizard, and in the art of creating legal Holding Companies and Pools, he was considered an artist. By the beginning of the twentieth century, he was at the head of the world's most powerful fund and his personal assets were in the hundreds of millions. He was a respected member of New York's financial elite and a generous philanthropist, whose contributions were not limited to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Among the members of the museum's Board of Trustees, many other famous businessmen and financiers were present such as William K. Vanderbilt, investor and rail road owner; S. P. Avery, the notorious art dealer; Darius O. Mills, the banker and railroad investor; Henry G. Marquand, the famous jeweler and rail road owner; Hiram Hitchcock, the owner of a hotel firm; as well as Daniel Huntington, F. W. Rhineland, William K. Dodge and William L. Andrews, who were either prominent businessmen or artists, but all members of respected New York families.[3]

Despite the notoriety, the power and the professional success of these men, they lacked knowledge in the field of art, art management and conservation. This is easily understood, as they were neither art historians, nor trained curators. Their main job as Trustees was to look over the financial management of the museum and they did this with success. Their professional backgrounds gave an advantage to the museum. They were all endowed with both valuable financial knowledge and an active social network. Thus, the museum was managed in a very business like way and opened to New York's high society.

An example of this can be seen in the way they managed the museums assets and diversified them very quickly on multiple markets. In 1905, the Metropolitan sold the property that Jacob S Rogers had donated to the museum at his death in 1901. The property spanned from 501 on Broadway to 72 on Mercer Street. This was a five story apartment which went on for over 200 yards in Manhattan. For over four years, the museum kept the real-estate without renovating or using it. Because the Metropolitan neither lacked money, nor needed the volume for offices or storage, the Board of Trustees patiently waited for prices to rise before selling the property on the market. In other words, the Trustees were speculating on the real-estate market.[4]

Generous donations, like the one made by Jacob S. Rogers, were not rare at the time. The social position of the Metropolitan's Trustees provided the museum with the wealthiest urban elite which existed in the United States at the time. The museum's location on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, made it part of New York's high society. In addition, the limited number of cultural institutions at the time made it one of the only recipients available for philanthropists inclined to art donations.[5]

The Metropolitan museum benefited both from the business skills and social ties of its Board, yet sometimes the Trustee's financial logic came into opposition with more ethic considerations. As it were, the museum's public use and mission of educating and conserving was put in peril by such management. An example of this happened in 1892, when the Board was confronted with the decision to either or not open on Sundays. As one of the oldest and most active Trustees explained to *The New York Times*: "the whole question is one of finances. A large majority of the board is in favor of keeping the museum open on Sunday; they think it is a good thing and they know that it is appreciated by the class of people whom it is especially designed to benefit. But a great institution like the Metropolitan Museum cannot be run without money, and it certainly ought not to be treated in a niggardly spirit by the cities authorities. The city should willingly provide every dollar for its running expenses. Including the extra expense of keeping the museum open Sundays. We have no other income that we can count on for current expenses." [6]

This rather long extract is revealing of how the trustees saw their role and how they thought they should go about it. They were conscious that many working citizens could only free themselves on Sunday. In addition to conserving art, the museum's missions statement made education their second official goal and allowed them city subsidies.[7] They knew that they had to respect this and be open when the most people were free. In order to accomplish this, the Trustees believed they needed more money.

The problem resided in the fact that the number of visitors did not cover the expenses of opening on Sundays. The city subsidized the weekend opening with 75,000 dollars, but had promised 95,000 dollars a few months earlier. A closer look at the Museum's financial records of the time shows that money was not really a problem. The Metropolitan possessed on an account over 150,000

dollars, which were available and reserved to buy works of art. They had an additional 200,000 dollars, which were put on the side to finance Catherine Lorillard Wolfe's collection, who had been a friend of the Board and had donated a sizable collection at her death in 1887. On another account, Henry G. Maynard, ex-president of the Board, but still a Trustee, had donated 50,000 dollars in bonds to the museum. The problem with these bonds was that they had a 5 percent interest rate and if the Board cashed them in, the interest would be lost.[8]

The museum's account was over 400,000 dollars, in addition to the city financing opening on Sundays up 75,000 dollars. Yet, the Trustees believed 20,000 dollars were missing. A journalist of *the New York Times* explained that the Board members decided to meet at William K. Vanderbilt's house to decide or not to close the museum on Sundays. According to the reporter, consensus would not be easily reached. Daniel Huntington and a few others did not want to pay what the city had promised, they wanted the museum to close. Others wanted the museum to remain open, but did not know where to find the money.[9] The financial and business logic which drove these men in the corporate, finance and business worlds made it difficult for them to put themselves in a position where they would lose money. The 50,000 dollars in bonds they had could finance Sunday openings for two and a half years, but this would mean losing a profitable interest rate. These men were after all part of the best and most successful businessmen of their time, the logic of a non-profit organization seemed difficult to integrate.

By not wanting to lose the interest of 50,000 dollars at 5 percent, certain members of the Board forgot their mission statement, to conserve and educate. If they closed on Sundays, they would educate less people and be less available to the public. This fact did appear to overrule all others, for in the end, after long debates, they found the money to keep the museum open through out the weekend.[10]

The long quote transcribed above reveals a somewhat condescending tone regarding the municipality, which shows the existence of a discrepancy with the fact that the museum was partly publicly funded and could at any time be shut down or put under investigation by the authorities. Especially when the board of Trustees seemed to be covering up an archaeological, scientific and conservation scandal, as we will now see.

From the 1880s through the 1890s, the Board of Trustees revealed a growing incompetence when dealing with the Metropolitan Museums' internal management. This is best shown through their choice of the museum's first director. In 1879, the Trustees elected Luigi P. Di Cesnola as director of the museum and member of the Board.[11] Six months after his election, an international scandal broke out. A scandal which went on for almost twenty five years.

After immigrating from Italy at an early age, Di Cesnola enrolled in the Union army during the Civil War as a simple ground infantryman and was decorated for his bravado and courage. When the war ended, he had become a brigadier general. After having been spotted by government officials at the end of the war, he was sent to Larnaca, Cyprus, as an embassy envoy in 1865. There he was able to devote his time to his passion, archeology for twelve years.[12]

In Larnaca, he researched much about Cypriot history and art, and concentrated on the Temple of Curium. After figuring out the probable existence of a treasure, he began digs and discovered a secret vault. Inside, there was a treasure made of gold and silver artifacts, as well as statues and pottery. He scrupulously wrote down all the details of his research, his digs and his discovery in several journals. Once his commission came to an end in Cyprus, he went back to the US with his treasure and journals in 1877.[13]

Back in new York, he started restoring the pieces and edited his journals into a book. His treasure and journal gave him a huge prestige in New York and he was integrated into the city's high society. In addition to his adventures and treasure, his war medal conferred to him a certain validation of his character. The Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum met him and were rapidly interested by his finds. At the time, the museum was closed for renovations. The Board of Trustees were so thrilled by the man that they decided to elect him as the first director of the Metropolitan and bought his treasure as an addition to the museum's collection. Once employed, Di Cesnola would have time to continue restoring the artifacts he had gathered.[14]

Two consecutive scandals appeared in the press not six months after his nomination and the reopening of the museum. In a first article of the *New York Herald*, published in August 1880, art critics Clarence Cook and Gaston L. Feuardent questioned publicly the authenticity of the Curium treasure and accused Di Cesnola of having “mended and patched up and combined from fragments most of the statues in the collection.”[15] In addition to this, the Cypriot government claimed that the excavations were illegal, for Di Cesnola had no legal authorizations to conduct digs around Curium and had no authorization to move the artifacts out of Cyprus.[16]

For two years, the judiciary branch looked over the case and in 1882 an investigatory committee declared that the restoration process made by Di Cesnola on the artifacts was legitimate, thus declaring him innocent. But what the investigatory committee forgot to underline was that Di Cesnola, in an amateurish approach, had destroyed much of the value of the objects he restored, altering pieces as Cook and Feuardent had explained. The committee had no real knowledge of art or archeology and in the end, they declared the collection legitimate.[17]

In addition to ignoring the Cypriot government and the calls of art critics Clarence Cook and Gaston L. Feuardent, the US authorities were unable to prove the authenticity of the treasure. They were only able to determine that the restorations were actually done and this seemed enough to consider the treasure real. Newspapers on the other hand did not feel that the proof provided by the investigatory committee was enough. In 1882, once the verdict had been given, *The New York Times* attacked Di Cesnola and called him “ridiculously incompetent.” According to the newspaper, he was a liar who had committed perjury. They also condemned the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum for not having had any impartial investigation and that their conclusions were not receivable. They also, after research, found out that Di Cesnola was not a general in the Union army, but had ended his career as colonel.[18]

By 1884, the international art community had finished its own investigation concerning the Curium Temple treasure and had published its conclusions. A well positioned French historian inside academia named Jean-Paul Richter, after a long and detailed analysis, came to the conclusion that in fact the artifacts were not discovered together. They were not contemporary of each other and their geographical origins seemed to point towards different parts of the island. According to him, the collection was a heterogeneous composition of Cypriot artifacts that Di Cesnola could have very well bought on local markets and from antic dealers. In addition, a more blatant proof of his lie was the fact that there was no signs of any digs around the Temple of Curium and there was no vault whatsoever. The French historian had actually gone to Cyprus with a copy of Di Cesnola's book. According to Richter, the whole thing was in fact a scam.[19]

The French historian did conclude that the artifacts gathered by Di Cesnola were a historic treasure, for it was composed of very fine and rare pieces, even if some had much suffered from Di Cesnola's restoration, but in no case they were the archaeological find Di Cesnola claimed them to be. The report by Richter was published in the *Courrier des Arts* in France and sent as an open letter to the Metropolitan Museum. The French were Officially and internationally warning the Metropolitan's Board of Trustees of the fraud.[20]

Upon the results of Jean-Paul Richter, Clarence Cook and Gaston Feuardent, *The New York Times* concluded that the three volumes of Di Cesnola's journal were in fact proof that he suffered from an acute state of “Munchhausenism.”[21] What the journalist did not comprehend was why the Board of Trustees continued protecting Di Cesnola. In 1882, *The New York Times* criticized the position taken by William K. Vanderbilt, J. P. Morgan and the rest of the Board. The newspaper attacked them openly and qualified them as blatantly incompetent. The newspaper even stated that because the museum was for public use and service, and received city funding, such obvious mismanagement resulted in the lose of public money. Such behavior was seen as “scandalous” and the Board's composition revealed the elite's superiority over the public whom they supposedly served.[22]

One year after the report made by Richter, *The New York Times* received a new report written by W. J. Stillman on the Di Cesnola collection. It was commissioned by the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society of New York, who explained that they were weary of being ridiculed around the world with this affair. The conclusions of Stillman were that “the Trustees have been abominably duped.” “The question as it now stands is an open scandal, not to be closed by

personalities." The personalities Stillman was referring too were of course the Board of Trustees.[23]

After several corrosive newspaper articles, *The New York Times* abandoned the affair. The federal government did not lend a benevolent ear to Cyprus and the report made by the French historian went without official notice. The investigative committee asked by the judicial branch had given its ruling and nothing more followed through. Ten years later, in 1895, the newspaper edited a last article on the Di Cesnola scandal. The newspaper attacked one last time the museum's director for his incompetence, but this time the Board of Trustees was not directly blamed. J. P. Morgan, William K. Vanderbilt and Daniel Huntington were not presented anymore as the ones responsible, but this time as victims. Victims of their own ignorance. Yet, the article was written because nine Trustees were going to suggest to the Board to fire Di Cesnola, ten years after the fact. Henry Marquand, the president of the Board at the time, was unconvinced by the facts and threatened to quite if Di Cesnola was fired. In the end, the board voted unanimously to keep the fake general as director of the museum.[24]

Again, in 1902, the name of Di Cesnola reappeared in *The New York Times*. He wanted to buy for the museum a sculpture entitled *Saturnalia* by the modern Italian artist Bondi. Bondi's work was described as disgusting and to accept it, even as a gift, was seen as an insult to the national mind. Di Cesnola was called a fool who knew nothing about the Fine Arts.[25] He had by this time been the first director of the Metropolitan Museum, one of the largest and most famous in the US, for over 23 years. Di Cesnola died two years later. The Trustees never acknowledged their mistakes and they never explained why they did not fire Di Cesnola.

The beginning of conservation were hard in certain US museums. Not all suffered from the same problems, but such examples reveal how Board of Trustees were at the center of the management of cultural facilities. The Metropolitan Museum was a municipal building for it was subsidized by public funding and had legal benefits to reduce its cost. Yet, the Board of Trustees could easily become a threat to their own institution by going against their official mission statement, which was, and still is, to conserve and educate.

The absence of professionals in restoration and conservation led to irreversible damages, mislabeling and utter frauds. The Cypriot statues from Di Cesnola's collection were altered in drastic ways during their restoration. Their very authenticity was debunked, yet the Board of Trustees never accepted it and continued the display of the collection while the rest of the world wondered why. The Trustees were prominent and powerful businessmen, which was a good thing when it came to financial management, but when it concerned art conservation true problems were created. From such scandals, there arose the need to form new professionals who would actually know what conservation was all about.

In a private and philanthropic system, the Metropolitan's Board of Trustees tested the limits of this logic. All the issues they faced in the 1880s and 1890s explain why very quickly in the twentieth century, universities created new diplomas and curricula to put newly educated employees on the market, thus creating art conservation as we know it today. By 1929, when the MOMA opened, such questions were not an issue anymore and the museum could rely on a new generation who could help such institution prosper in a structured way.[26]

Concerning Di Cesnola's collection, the problem has not yet been solved. The Cypriot government still asks for reparations and would like the Metropolitan Museum to stop exhibiting the collection and to return their cultural heritage to Cyprus.[27]

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[1] Louis Auchincloss, *J. P. Morgan: The Financier as Collector*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990,

chapter 1.

[2] On J. P. Morgan's financial strategies see: Jeremy Bryman, *J. P. Morgan: Banker to a Growing Nation*, New York: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, 2001; and Vincent P. Carosso, *The Morgans: Private International Bankers, 1854-1913*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

[3] On the composition of the Metropolitan's Board of Trustees see Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces, the Story of the Metropolitan Museum*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970, chapter 1.

[4] "In the Real Estate Field," *The New York Times*, 16 June 1905, p. 4.

[5] On the social network of museum Trustees see Marc Smith, "Speculation Art Market and the Birth of a Modern US Art Network from the Industrialization to the 1930s. A Social and Cultural Monopoly," PhD diss. , Université de Montpellier Paul Valéry, 2011, chapter 12 and epilogue.

[6] "Must Have More Money: Else the Museum of Art Will Not Be Open on Sundays," *The New York Times*, 8 November 1892, p. 2. The *New York Times* does not give the identity of the Trustee and only defines him as "one of the oldest and most active."

[7] Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[10] *Idem.*

[11] Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[12] Elizabeth Mcfadden, *The Glitter and the Gold*, New York: Dial Press, 1971, p. 60.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 61-65.

[14] "Gaston L. Feuardent," *The New York Times*, 13 June 1893, p. 3.

[15] Cited in: "Clarence Cook's Charges," *The New York Times*, 4 March 1885.

[16] Constantine Markides, "Taking Stock of Our Stolen Past," *Archeology News*, 13 August 2006, <http://www.archaeologynews.org/link.asp?ID=103579&Title=Taking%20stock%20of%20our%20stolen%20past>, retrieved 2007-04-17, p. 1.

[17] "An Impending Scandal," *The New York Times*, 2 April 1902, p. 2.

[18] Cited in: "That Cesnola Scandal," *The New York Times*, 24 November 1884, p. 2.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[23] "The Metropolitan Museum of Art Scandal," *The New York Times*, 17 August 1885, p. 4.

[24] "That Old Cesnola Scandal," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1895.

[25] "An Impending Scandal," *The New York Times*, 2 April 1902.

[26] For example see the importance played by Alfred Barr Junior in the development of the MOMA

in Michael C. Fitzgerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

[27] Constantine Markides, "Taking Stock of Our Stolen Past," *op. cit.*, retrieved 2007-04-17.

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